



Islam requires that the month of Ramadan be devoted to fasting and prayer. During this month, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset each day. Muslims are banned from fighting other Muslims during Ramadan, but they may engage in combat with non-Muslims. Islamic extremists have extolled Ramadan as a month of jihad, or holy war, against non-believers. Many Islamic extremists believe that suicide operations (“martyrdom”), especially if done during Ramadan, guarantee the bomber a place in paradise. In 2007, Ramadan is expected to begin the evening of 12 September and run through 12 October.

NIGHT OF POWER

Laylat al-Qadr

A time that Islamic extremists might consider especially auspicious for a terrorist attack is Laylat al-Qadr (“Night of Power”). Islamic tradition holds that, on this night, rewards for deeds pleasing to Allah are magnified a thousandfold, and extremists in particular believe that the gates of heaven are opened then for those who wage “jihad” in defense of Islam to enter paradise. Islamic scholars generally agree that the most likely date for Laylat al-Qadr to occur each year is the evening of the 27th day of Ramadan—the anniversary of Allah’s first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad of the Quran—which is expected to be the night of 8-9 October in 2007. However, many scholars believe that other likely dates for Laylat al-Qadr are the evenings of the 21st, 23rd, 25th, or 29th day of Ramadan. Some scholars teach that any of the last 10 evenings of Ramadan are potential dates for Laylat al-Qadr.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

A second date during the month of Ramadan when Islamic extremists might consider it auspicious to attack would be the anniversary of the Battle of Badr, the 17th day of Ramadan. Muhammad and his army fought this battle against non-Islamic combatants in the face of overwhelming odds. It is considered to have laid the foundation for the Islamic State. In 2007, the 17th day of Ramadan is expected to be on 29 September.